



FEMA

Community Partners Aid Citizens Using the Buyout Program

Cape Girardeau, MO—For a city on the western shore of the Mississippi River, city officials and citizens are determined not to let that the river swallow up their homes as it did during the great Midwest floods of the 1990s.

In the late 1950s, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built an impressive concrete floodwall to prevent the river from flooding homes and businesses along the river, which was successful in holding back the swollen river for several years. In 1993 as floodwaters rose, some sections of the city were exposed to the river and resulted in 151 homes being damaged. The city spent \$442,000 on sandbagging, extra crews, renting emergency generators, and flood debris removal and cleanup. The 1995 flood cost another \$300,000.

Out of these crises, a partnership emerged among the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), the Missouri Department of Economic Development (MDED), the Salvation Army Midland, the Interfaith Ministries, and the City of Cape Girardeau. Together, these organizations combined resources and addressed each family's needs, making it possible for them to participate in a flood buyout program.

Buyouts are based on the premise that using tax funds for buyouts saves taxpayers money in the end from not having to pay for repeated disaster recoveries. Once purchased, damaged structures are demolished and the land converted to deed-restricted permanent open space.

For the City of Cape Girardeau, the buyout program was highly successful. FEMA contributed more than \$1.14 million to a \$2.6 million program to purchase 109 properties. Residential structures in the 100-year floodplain now number only 17.

During the March 2008 flooding, the city experienced only some closed streets, basement seepage, and limited flood damage.

"The buyout effort demonstrated how communities could take care of their residents in a crisis," said Housing Assistance Coordinator Stephen S. Williams, who worked on the buyout program for the city at the time.

"The key to the program was identifying the needs of the people in the community," added Ken Eftink, director of Development Services for the City of Cape Girardeau's Division of Planning Services.



**Cape Girardeau County,
Missouri**



Quick Facts

Year:

1995

Sector:

Public

Cost:

\$2,411,398.00 (Actual)

Primary Activity/Project:

Acquisition/Buyouts

Primary Funding:

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)